THE
CATHOLIC RADICAL

"...to foster a society based on creed instead of greed." Peter Maurin

December/January 2024-25 ***Price: For whatever it's worth.***

Nuclear Spending Spree

by Paul Popinchalk

I am a member of Massachusetts Peace Action and a lifelong pacifist. I'm also a husband, father, and grandfather who despairs about the global tensions that could result in nuclear war. I grew up in the small farming community of Preston, Connecticut and I've been following a series in *The New York Times* entitled "At the Brink." The October 10th issue caught my eye because it discussed how America is preparing for its nuclear future by focusing on a fifth-grade classroom at Connecticut's Preston Veterans Memorial School. In Melissa Durkee's classroom, the children were engaged in a six-week course taught by a defense contractor from General Dynamics, the leading manufacturer of the US nuclear ballistic missile submarine fleet. When the contractor asks the children, "Does anyone know why we are here?" 10-year-old Adalie shoots her hand into the air and replies, "Because you're building submarines and you need people and you're teaching us about it in case we're interested in working there when we get older?"

Adalie is correct. The US Navy has put in an order for General Dynamics to produce 12 nuclear ballistic missile submarines by 2042, a job that's projected to cost $130 billion. Thousands of workers will be required to fulfill this order. General Dynamics over the past 18 months has traveled to elementary schools across New England to teach children the basics of submarine manufacturing and perhaps inspire some students to consider one day joining the shipyard.

The US already fields a fleet of 12 ballistic missile submarines. Each of these submarines has 20 active missile tubes with each missile carrying 4 or 5 warheads. Every submarine possesses 2.5 times the explosive power of **ALL** the bombs dropped during World War II.

This is only part of the spending spree that currently drives our nation's preparation for nuclear war. The Pentagon oversees the US nuclear triad. This is a three-sided military structure that consists of land-based, air-launched,

Grace Sliwoski

and sea-based nuclear weapons systems. The Air Force manages 400 Minuteman intercontinental ballistic missiles, each with a single nuclear warhead. All of these missiles are scheduled for replacement. These missiles are located in silos 80 feet underground in the backyards and farm fields of midwesterners in Wyoming, Nebraska, Colorado, Montana, and North Dakota. The new missiles will be installed over 20 years at a cost of approximately $141 billion. For the past two years, representatives of the US Air Force have scoured the northern Great Plains to talk to residents about the plans for the new missiles and support buildings that will need to be constructed under this renewal program over the next 20 years. This

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Social Sin

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

In the Catholicism of my youth, personal sin dominated. The Church taught that sins were either mortal or venial, the first being the most serious offenses which could lead to eternal separation from God, and the second less serious ones that injure but don't destroy a person's relationship with Divinity. Sins listed in the Ten Commandments ranked very high, while pride, gluttony, and inadvertent wrongdoing ranked less. With the exception of atheism and communism, "isms" were not considered sins; certainly not militarism, capitalism, racism, sexism, or colonialism. The commandment, "**Thou shall not kill**," was translated into "Thou shall not commit murder" to justify state-sanctioned killing by soldiers, police, and executioners.

In 1963, in his encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris*, Pope John XXIII introduced Catholics to the idea that the use of nuclear weapons was sinful. Later, in Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, unrestrained capitalism came under fire. In 1979, The US Conference of Catholic Bishops called racism a sin. In his 2015 encyclical *Laudato si*, Pope Francis denounced environmental destruction. In 2017, he condemned the possession of nuclear weapons. In 2018, the Catholic Catechism was amended to denounce the death penalty. More and more often, Pope Francis calls the rejection of migrants and refugees "a grave sin."

This trend has not been without consequence. In 1979, Worcester's College of the Holy Cross divested from South Africa to protest the racism of apartheid. More recently, after students at Nativity, a tuition-free middle school run

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Nuclear Spree

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poses real challenges for many of the small communities where this infrastructure will be built. Worker housing and traffic management in the host communities and many other contingencies need to be accounted for.

Another key element of these weapon systems upgrades is the manufacturing of what the industry calls plutonium pits to create the cores that trigger the explosions of nuclear bombs. Congress has directed the Los Alamos National Lab in New Mexico to produce 30 plutonium pits a year by 2026 along with another 50 pits per year to be created at the Savannah River National Laboratory in South Carolina. When this mass production of these plutonium pits was undertaken at the Rocky Flats production site in Colorado, things did not go well. There were rampant environmental violations and huge security issues related to the risk of stolen material getting into the hands of bad actors. The price tag for this decades-long program is estimated to cost $2 trillion. The intellectual capability of tens of thousands of America's finest scientists and manufacturing workers and all the trillions of dollars that these programs will cost over decades is to reinforce the perverse concept of MAD, Mutual Assured Destruction. It is the theory that nuclear armed enemies of the United States will never attack us because they understand that our response will guarantee the annihilation of our opponents.

In 1963, Saint John XXIII, writing in his Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*, urged the prohibition of atomic weapons and stated that authentic and lasting international peace cannot rest on a balance of military power but only mutual trust. He called for the breakdown of the climate of distrust that could dismantle international arms control frameworks and the growth of new military technology. His foresight has turned out to be sadly accurate.

Pope Francis, after his 2019 apostolic journey to the Atomic Bomb Hypocenter Monument in Nagasaki, Japan, said:

"...one of the deepest longings of the human heart for security, peace, and stability. The possession of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction is not the answer to this desire; indeed, they seem always to thwart it.... In a world where millions of children and families live in inhumane conditions, the money that is squandered ...through the manufacture, upgrade, maintenance, and sale of ever more destructive weapons, is an affront crying out to heaven."

This waste of human and material resources is occurring at a time when the Department of Housing and Urban Development estimates that there are over 650,000 homeless people in the United States.

In September 2017, Most Reverend John Wester, Archbishop of Santa Fe in Albuquerque, New Mexico, wrote a pastoral letter entitled *Living in the Light of Christ's Peace*, following his trip to Japan where he visited Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In the letter, he wrote: "It was a somber, sobering experience as I realized that on August 6, 1945, humanity crossed the line into the darkness of the nuclear age. Historically, the Archdiocese of Santa Fe has been part of a peace initiative, one that would help make sure these weapons would never be used again. I believe it is time to rejuvenate that peace work."

And so it is that we are called to raise up our voices and oppose this war funding and ask instead that we dedicate our treasure to immediate and sincere negotiation and dialogue to reduce the threat of nuclear war and lessen the suffering of humanity. We are blessed beyond measure that Worcester's member of Congress, Representative Jim McGovern, along with Representative Earl Blumenauer of Oregon, have introduced House Resolution 77, a critical legislative organizing vehicle to elevate congressional debate and leadership on nuclear disarmament at this moment when the risk of nuclear war is greater than it's been in over 60 years. This resolution called on the US to embrace the goals and provisions of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and to take concrete steps to prevent nuclear war. Let us take to the streets and educate our fellow citizens about this critical call for action. Ω

Editor's note: The author's references are available on request at theresecw2@gmail.com.

Saints Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker is part of a coalition that has protested in New London, Connecticut against General Dynamic's work on new nuclear submarines. April 2025 protests, including nonviolent civil diosbedience, will be detailed in the February-March issue of The Catholic Radical.

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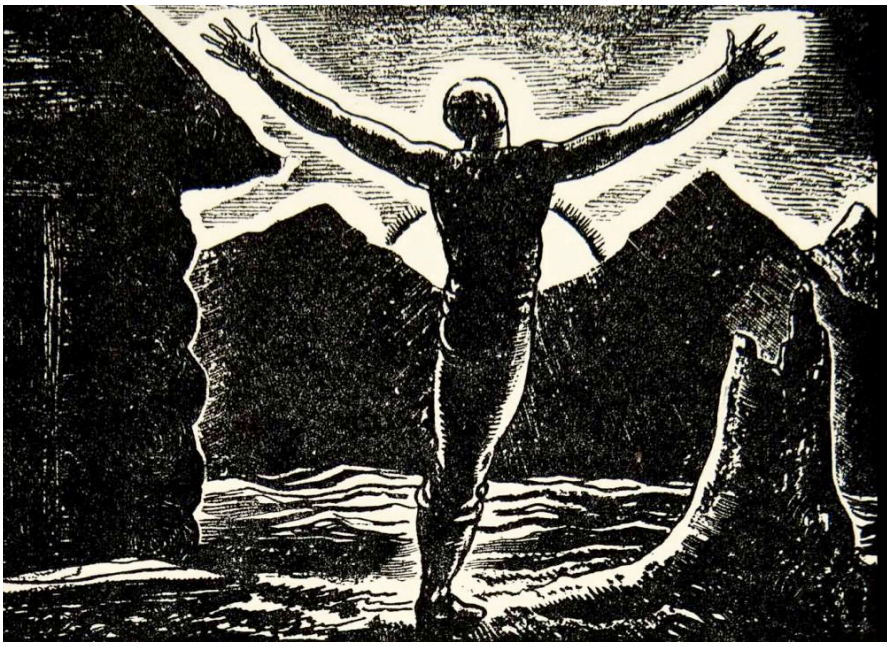
Founded in 1933 by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, the Catholic Worker is a lay movement serving the poor while denouncing injustice and proclaiming peace. We are not tax exempt. We rely entirely on the generosity of our supporters to meet our expenses. We welcome volunteers, letters, poetry, articles, artwork, and donations.

To Be More Fully Human

by Mary O'Connell

Editor's Note: Mary O'Connell lives in a Catholic intentional community called Jerusalem Farm in Kansas City, Missouri. She coordinates transformational service retreats for high school and college students. She also stewards a herd of goats to graze invasive species in a city park. Currently, she is traveling to visit family and Catholic Workers on a discernment break from her roles in Kansas City. She describes herself as,"passionate about women's soccer, cross-stitching, and mismatched socks."



Rockwell Kent

Similar to the way a puzzle sits on a table in the corner, pieces askew, knocked on the ground, only the border completed and complete chaos in the middle, my introduction to the Catholic Worker Movement has been a gradual process. Each encounter or gathering brings more framework and understanding to the spirit of the movement. Over the last couple days, I have had the honor to shadow Scott and Claire at the Saints Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker in Worcester, Massachusetts. The piece of the puzzle that clicked into place during my time here comes from Phil Berrigan calling us to be more fully human. [On the day of Mary's arrival in Worcester, she attended a weekly peace vigil and, after dinner, a Zoom presentation by Brad Wolf, the author of **A Ministry of Risk: Writings on Peace and Nonviolence**, collection of works by Phil Berrigan.]

Standing on the street corner with a sign that reads "PEACE!" will not stop the war. Nor will it even alter the course of the war. Nothing particularly significant happens when you stand on the corner during rush hour. Except for one thing—it changes the space inside of you. We smile at people passing by, we stand in solemn reflection, and we allow our hearts to be moved by the brutality of war. We open ourselves up to a more human compassion. We harden not our hearts. And importantly, we do not allow the devastating and particular facts—for example, on October 13th, twenty Palestinians were burned alive in their tents—into our hearts without also allowing God's hope for redemption, love, and peace also into our hearts.

"So, God, what would you like me to do today?"

The alternative is cold passivity toward the brutality of war and destruction of life. This corrodes something inside us. We turn inward. We choose to be unaffected by the magnificent and vulnerable network of life. We may feel more "successful" in whatever we choose to do, but we grow closed off in doing it. The invitation is not to be effective; it is to be human, alive, moved, and faithful.

Naturally, to be human also means to be to a certain extent lost. So, we wake up each morning, love and praise God, and then ask, "So, God, what would you like me to do today?"

Here enters the playful side of life. Some days bring about grocery store runs, car troubles, or cross country meets. And other days bring about important acts of community organizing, spiritual conversations, or civil disobedience.

I am inspired by endless stories of civil disobedience that many Catholic Workers and friends have creatively planned and courageously enacted over the years. From Santa Claus arrests for protesting the sale of war toys to exorcisms of corporate evil in support of striking nurses at Saint Vincent's Hospital, there is an exciting sense that we can resist oppression creatively. And we can resist oppression joyfully, so as to make our enemies laugh and play along. Joyful creativity is inherently human whether it is practiced at the scene of horrific war crimes or practiced when the car battery goes dead from running the emergency blinkers too long.

Things start to click together when we live in a more fully human way. Efforts for peace have power. Joy on a Wednesday is contagious. As Saint Francis of Assisi said, we can begin each day with "Let us begin, for until now we have done nothing."

Thank you to all in Worcester who made the visit fruitful! Ω

Sin

(Continued from Page 1)

by priests from Holy Cross, raised Black Lives Matter and Celebrate Diversity flags, the Jesuits defied Bishop Robert McManus' order that the flags be taken down.

Unfortunately, Catholic rejection of social sins has not been widespread. For example, the majority of Catholic US Supreme Court justices are stridently pro-death penalty, going so far as to not intervene to stop the execution of Richard Glossip, a man whom the victim's family and trial prosecutor had come to believe was innocent.

President Biden, the first Catholic to hold the US presidency since Vatican II, supports unrestricted access to abortion and does not promote ways to reduce it. He supports the $1.7 trillion dollar construction of new nuclear weapons. Just before Advent, he approved the delivery of antipersonnel land mines to Ukraine, which Pope Francis denounces as "weapons of cowards."

Biden also lavishes billions of additional dollars in military aid to Israel for its invasion of Gaza. Countless Israeli attacks on Palestinian homes, schools, shelters, hospitals, mosques, and even churches have not slowed the cash flow. The October 13, 2024 *New York Times* full-page story "What 65 Doctors, Nurses, and Paramedics Saw in Gaza," exposed Israeli targeting of Palestinian children as well as other war crimes. Nonetheless, Biden sends Israel more and more arms. While the president does urge Israel to avoid civilian casualties, his appeals are like those of a judge who chides a serial arsonist to stop burning houses, and then reminds him to pick up free cans of gasoline as he leaves the court.

Unfortunately, when, in accordance with Church teaching on racism and war, the Holy Cross faculty voted to divest from Israel, the Board of Trustees replied, "Holy Cross refrains from issuing institutional declarations on global political events or other matters that are not directly connected to our work as an academic institution." Unlike the college's stand against racism in South Africa, it chooses the sin of omission on genocide against Palestinians. Apparently, Holy Cross does not want to lose donations from supporters of Israel. Denouncing social sin always takes a back seat when money is at stake. Consider how the Vatican's condemnation of nuclear weapons has had no impact on Holy Cross' support for ROTC, a program which sends one of seven students into the nuclear navy. The desire for federal funding supersedes opposition to the increasingly likely sin of nuclear annihilation.

Lastly, as the US election demonstrated in spades, Catholic political opposition to social injustice is still rare. Too many Catholic politicians favor closing US borders to migrants and refugees while deporting millions of undocumented families already here. The fact that migrants consistently improve America without increasing crime means nothing to these opportunists who rode to office on waves of xenophobic lies and hatred. Christ's proclamation that what we do to the least of our sisters and brothers, we do to Him, means nothing to them.

On top of that, many Catholic politicians and voters refuse to take up the existential threats posed by nuclear weapons and climate change. Their embrace of sinful policies escapes condemnation from most American bishops who consider abortion euthanasia, and homosexuality the only social sins.

On November 12, the Associated Press reported from the US Catholic Conference meeting in Baltimore: "Several U.S. Catholic bishops on Wednesday encouraged the church to boldly share Vatican teachings on a range of hot-button issues, including the condemnation of abortion, euthanasia, surrogacy, and gender-affirming surgery." These bishops cherry-picked Pope Francis new encyclical *Dignitas Infinita* to exclude the pope's condemnation of forced migration, violence against women, poverty, and the death penalty. Conservative bishops do not boldly share Francis words, "No war is worth the loss of the life of even one human being." Mass-going Catholics are not likely to hear these bishops cite Francis saying "It is very difficult nowadays to invoke the rational criteria elaborated in earlier centuries to speak of the possibility of just war." While Pope Francis appointee Bishop Robert Barron of Minnesota stressed *Dignitas Infinita* is "not Democratic or Republican, liberal or conservative," too many Catholic bishops, politicians, and voters only stress issues highlighted in the Republican party platform.

So, where does that leave those of us who broadly oppose social sin, who grieve to see a nation, that a century ago accepted millions of migrants, slam its doors on today's "poor and huddled masses yearning to breathe free"? Can we ignore the imminent threats to survival posed by nuclear weapons and the climate emergency? Can we justify excluding migrants from places we have exploited and polluted?

Like Dorothy Day did in September of 1945 when she defied public and Church opinion to condemn the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we must "go on record" against **all** social sins. We must call our Catholic sisters and brothers to restore their relationship with our loving and merciful God. When politicians claim they have a mandate to perpetrate sin, we must say, "Not from us!"

Let's take to heart Saint Paul's advice to the Ephesians: "**You must rely on God's armor, or you will not be able to put up any resistance when the worst happens.... Stand your ground, with truth buckled round your waist, and integrity for a breastplate, wearing for shoes on your feet the eagerness to spread the gospel of peace**...." Ω

"What do you mean, your inbox is full and you can't take any messages?"

Unexpected Visitation

by Claire Schaeffer-Duffy

It was after midnight when I located CM. The town of Webster's only homeless person that night, she was easy to spot, even in the darkness, sitting there in a canvas lawn chair on the sidewalk outside the police station, heavily blanketed with her legs outstretched and feet resting on the statue of a lamb. "I am sleeping beside it for protection," she told me.

CM had stayed with us at least twice before. An attractive woman in her early sixties, she was pious, pro-Trump, and maddeningly hapless. Like some directionless bird, she flitted from place to place, pursuing plans that were far-fetched and unachievable. By her own telling, CM had endured abuse as a child and sexual violence as an adult, experiences that affected her ability to provide for herself. "You need to focus," I'd tell her. She dressed well and had the tastes and habits of someone who once lived comfortably; yet whenever we spoke, I suspected there were details in her life she had deleted or refused to acknowledge. Quite a few people, including her family and at least one priest, have closed their doors to her.

"We can give you one night of rest," I said as CM got into the car. Two or three weeks later, she was at the front door again, this time thrusting a heavy box of food into my arms. "A gift for the house," she said. "Lots of organic stuff in there. You'll love it." Behind her on the sidewalk, I could see four or five 30-gallon black trash bags bulging with clothes. Piled atop these were the canvas lawn chair, now folded, a collapsible garment bag also full, and a rolled up, quilted blanket. She had crammed all of it into the uber she took from a women's shelter in Ashland, a town some twenty miles away from the Catholic Worker. Although CM never asked outright, I knew she was hoping for a bed. Her presumption angered me, and I was secretly relieved we had five guests staying in the house and could offer nothing. I thanked her for the food and retreated into the kitchen. She's a survivor. She'll figure something out, I thought.

But CM did not leave. Seeing her and the bulging, black trash bags still on the sidewalk fifteen minutes later, I stepped out onto the front porch to scold her away. "This is so manipulative," I said. "What were you thinking hauling all this stuff from Ashland and showing up here?"

"It's a holy place," CM said. Unmoved, I told her if she ever pulled a stunt like this again, I would call the police. Then back into the kitchen I went. Twenty minutes passed and the doorbell rang. CM wanted me to know that while she was praying the rosary, a practice she had not been doing of late, our Brazilian neighbor had said maybe

she could put her stuff in his pick-up truck parked across the street. But within the hour, the neighbor's wife came out to say there would be no storing of things in her husband's truck, because it was full. CM and her stuff remained on the sidewalk.

As evening turned to night, I began to feel like a woman in some horror movie haunted, not by a stalker or monster, but by the needy person at her doorstep. Peering furtively through the curtains, I saw CM blanketed and hunkered down for the night in the canvas lawn chair, her feet resting on a rotting beam of our rail fence.

"You can't sleep on the sidewalk," I said, popping out onto the porch again. "This isn't Webster, you know. There are lots of people out here on the streets in Worcester."

Beneath the white light of the street lamp, CM's ordinarily pretty face looked pale and worn. "Please, don't call the police," she said. Back in the kitchen, a nagging debate began within me. I couldn't let a woman my age, spend the night out on the sidewalk. At some miserable, dark hour, she would ring the doorbell to ask for a blanket or use of the bathroom. Scott was in bed with a terrible cold, and I was heart tired. Hours of scrolling through ominous assessments of the recent presidential elections had left me feeling jittery and despairing about the future. I yearned for the oblivion of sleep.

The wealthy Israelite Tobit succumbed to despair, so the story goes. And who could blame him? He was held captive in the city of Ninevah where he became impoverished and blinded by disease. "What joy is there for me?" he said to the angel Raphael. "I can no longer see the light of heaven."

"Take courage," Raphael said. It's the message we hear throughout Advent: Watch for the light in the darkness. Trust in the vulnerable one. Infant. Lamb. *Take* courage which can sometimes come to us haplessly.

It was after 10 p.m. when CM and I pulled up to the entryway of the Hilton Gardens Hotel where I had booked her a night's stay. My plan was to drop her at the front door and head home for bed, but there was all of her stuff in the back of the car. After I had unloaded the last of it onto a luggage trolley, CM asked if we could pray the Memorare. She wanted to offer up to God her sufferings of the present for our Catholic Worker house, for Scott, and our two guests who were also sick.

"Sure," I said. "It will be the first prayer I've prayed this day."

"Oh, but there's your work," CM said. "Remember what Saint Benedict says? '*Ora et labora*.'" Standing in the brightly-lit hotel entryway, we bowed our heads while CM recited aloud the ancient Marian prayer: *Remember, O most gracious Virgin, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession was left unaided....*

"Amen," we both said, then I hugged CM, grateful for the first bit of peace felt that day. Ω

Dorothy Day:Radical Devotion

reviewed by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

Dorothy Day: Radical Devotion
Written by Jeffry Odell Korgen and Friar Mike Lasky, OFM Conv.
Illustrated by Christopher Cardinale
Paulist Press/ 106 pp

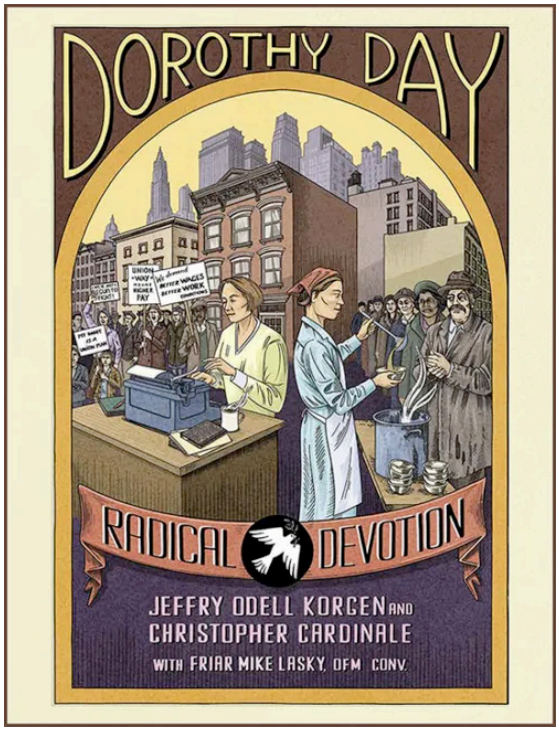
Years ago, I met Pete Seeger, one of my life-long heroes, only to catch him at a crabby moment. While it is a temptation to sum up the musician by this snapshot, it would be inaccurate.

Dorothy Day, like anyone, gave very different impressions to those who met her depending on the circumstances. Journalist, socialist, avid reader, devout Catholic, pacifist, anarchist, lover of opera, single mother, Catholic Worker, and dozens of other descriptions could be given to her. Indeed, some biographers choose to highlight particular aspects over others to paint a picture of Dorothy Day that is more activist and less religious or vice versa. When I attended the ceremony in Saint Patrick's Cathedral where Cardinal Dolan officially sent off documents to Rome supporting Dorothy's canonization, his homily focused exclusively on her performance of the works of mercy rather than her opposition to war or racism.

When new biographies are released, like **Dorothy Day: A Radical Devotion**, the authors should expect some who knew Dorothy to say, "That's not the way I remember things." Capturing the complexity of any human life is not easy, especially in a work that can be read in an infinitesimal fraction of the time that its subject lived.

I suppose this is why we should be grateful that there are so many biographies of Dorothy as well as her own autobiography and other writing. Those who never met Dorothy Day in person, like myself, receive a deeper impression of her through this diversity. She comes alive in the stories, in her words, and in those of others who knew her well.

When I first heard that Jeffry Korgen and Friar Mike Lasky had written a graphic novel about Dorothy's life, I immediately lowered my expectations. For me, calling a long comic books a graphic novel is akin to calling a garbage collector a sanitary engineer. But, I am glad to say that I was surprised and impressed at how much information the authors and artist of **Radical Devotion** conveyed and how sensitively they covered difficult chapters in Dorothy's life. To my surprise, some of the work moved me emotionally, and other segments brought to light aspects of Dorothy's life that were previously unfamiliar to me.



While, no biography is perfect, I would say without reservation that **Radical Devotion** is a fine addition to further understand the marvel of Dorothy Day's life. I recommend all of our readers to buy a copy and to use it as a springboard to reading more lengthy works about a woman who gave an extraordinary example of how to live justly in an imperfect world. Ω

Following the displacement of more than 700,000 Palestinians, during the 1948 war that created the Jewish state of Israel, the United Nations established the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to carry out direct relief and employment programs for Palestinian refugees.

Like all refugees, the Palestinians want to return to their homes, but, in order to maintain a Jewish state in a region where Jews are in the minority, Israel does not recognize the Palestinians as refugees and will not allow them to return. Nonetheless, original Palestinian refugees and their descendants in refugee camps have grown in number. UNRWA provides them essential services and needed employment.

On October 27, 2024, Israel's parliament voted to ban UNRWA within 90 days from conducting "any activity" or providing any service inside Israel, including the areas of annexed East Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank. The UN and independent humanitarian groups say UNRWA is essential for lifesaving operations on the ground in Gaza.

"This could potentially be a final knockout blow to the humanitarian response, certainly in Gaza," says Kate Phillips-Barrasso of the charity Mercy Corps. US State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said the legislation "poses risks for millions of Palestinians who rely on UNRWA for essential services."

The elimination of UNRWA represents a long-time Israeli goal of denying refugee status to displaced Palestinians. For Zionists, maintaining a Jewish majority takes precedence over international humanitarian law. Maintaining that majority by imperiling the lives of refugees is a genocidal war crime.

The United Nations and the United States must reject the Israeli ban on UNRWA in the strongest possible terms. If Israel does not repeal this ban, it should lose its seat at the UN and US aid until it complies with international law. Ω

Letters

Thank you, Scott, for the genealogical path into history.

For years, I have been researching genealogy, and writing.

We know the roots of war are in all of us, our families, our community groups, extended families and "tribes," before the eruptions and explosions of destruction at the national and international level. We will not and cannot eradicate war, if we do not eradicate, that is "take away the roots" within us.

Researching genealogy has been a search for the roots of the fear and trauma, inherited by my family, and traumatizing me early in life. I am astounded that I am alive, for I was suicidal since age five. Ironically, what might have saved me was another lethal disease (inherited), alcoholism. The attempt to numb my emotional/spiritual pain may have made me too clumsy and incompetent to succeed in killing myself.

I have felt like a failure most of my life, and still fight a great well of self-doubt. Often I have wondered what purpose do I or my life serve, regretting so many wasted years. However, prayers and meditation brought clarity, leading to a writing project. On July 4, I turned 70. Much more important, a few days earlier, on June 29, I celebrated 27 years of sobriety. Since my late thirties, I have not suffered a severe or suicidal depression. The gift I can give the world is the story of healing, transforming the seeds of war — any resentment, anger, self-pity, victimhood, or self-centered isolation — into compassion, empathy, love, service, and communion. Healing is possible, transformation is possible, peace is possible.

Healing and years of recovery led to acceptance and forgiveness of my family, immediate, extended, and ancestral. After years of detective work, including visiting my ancestral German village this last June, the seeds of inherited trauma were uncovered. Not surprisingly, it is related to many external wars, one of which — a most brutal and crushingly painful one — The Thirty Years War— is very tightly linked to what my ancestors brought with them to this country. The Thirty Years War is misnamed, of course. War not only continued in the early 1600s, but was actually more devastating. The reality is that we continue one war, generation after generation, all built on lies. The lies change, in order to continue the wars, but they persist.

My success in life is transforming the death-wishing Susan to one who turns to life, pulling the roots of destructive, toxic weeds, in the internal garden, to allow health, love, joy, gratitude, and unity with life to grow. This was only possible through the power of sharing stories. We don't learn from history because we don't have history. We only have a handful of stories written by the rich and powerful.

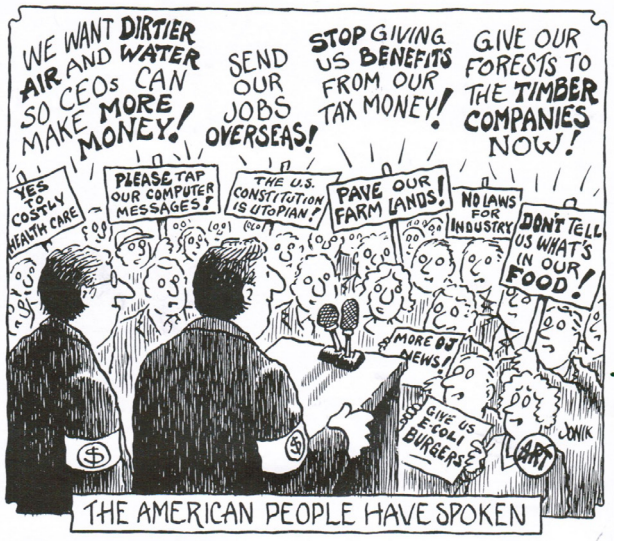
Using history, which includes my story, sprinkled in until toward the end of the book, I work at uncovering stories of the millions of people excluded. Millions of peasants, uneducated farmers, and their village crafts workers, and women, disabled, enslaved people, and the marginalized have been silenced for millennia, worldwide. The wars they faced were woven into the one I inherited. Our stories are all part of history.

I am alive through the power of sharing stories, transforming my destructive narrative that would have killed me. We need everyone's stories, in order to learn to transform our fear, the roots of hate, division and killing, into love, life, and unity.

Susan Schaller
Newton, Massachusetts

Editor's Note: Like Pope Francis, who said, "War Breeds War," we agree that wars go on much longer than historians suggest. Scott and Claire have ancestors who fought in many wars. As George Santayana said, "Those who do not learn history are doomed to repeat it."

Catholic Worker Calendar


WE WANT DIRTIER AIR AND WATER SO CEOs CAN MAKE MORE MONEY!
SEND OUR JOBS OVERSEAS!
STOP GIVING US BENEFITS FROM OUR TAX MONEY!
GIVE OUR FORESTS TO THE TIMBER COMPANIES NOW!
YES TO COSTLY HEALTH CARE
PLEASE TAP OUR COMPUTER MESSAGES!
THE U.S. CONSTITUTION IS UTOPIAN!
PAVE OUR FARM LANDS!
NO LAWS FOR INDUSTRY
DON'T TELL US WHAT'S IN OUR FOOD!
MORE OJ NEWS!
GIVE US E COLI BURGERS!
JOMK
THE AMERICAN PEOPLE HAVE SPOKEN

December 11, January 8 & 22 - Evening Prayer: Please join us for short silent meditation followed by Evening Prayer with Taizé chant at 52 Mason Street. 7:00 PM. Refreshments to follow.

December 22 - Christmas Caroling: Please join us in our annual caroling followed by mulled cider and Christmas cookies. 52 Mason Street. 6 PM. Refreshments to follow.

January 15 - Dealing with Irrational Public Demands: Please join Claire and Scott Schaeffer-Duffy as they lead a discussion of how to find hope and joy in a society where millions voted for a dangerous future. 52 Mason Street. 7 PM. Refreshments to follow.

Mason Street Musings

Four sunflowers grow in our front yard, an improbable blooming for mid-November in New England. The hyssop and bergamot I seeded have long gone brown, but the sunflowers weirdly, joyously flare yellow. They are the legacy of the big bird feeder our guest J. purchased last spring. The feeder is so big that when filled, the metal pole, upon which it hangs, curves downward dribbling seeds to the ground. Some escaped the bird's beak to become flowers.

In this second to last month of the year, life has gotten a little quieter for Scott. He spent the autumn coaching forty high-school students in cross-country, rising earlier than usual each weekday to finish household tasks before heading out to "run with the kids." He puts heart and soul into the effort which is as much about building a sense of community among young people as it is about running. Every season, you see them flower under his care.

As for me, I am still cramming to complete the final requirements for a Masters in English Literature at Worcester State University. Massachusetts allows you to enroll tuition-free in any public institution of higher learning once you turn sixty. I learned of this perk years ago from a 94-year-old woman who availed herself of this opportunity to obtain three advanced degrees during her senior years.

Brian Kavanagh

Several of my classes were multi-generational, us gray hairs sitting beside young teachers who, after a long day of work, showed up tired, but insightful, for an evening seminar. I am going to miss the community that inevitably occurs when people come together to reflect on works of literature, or to workshop a poem or short story. Aristotle was right. To study with others is edifying.

These days, we number seven or eight at the dining room table. The nightly sharing of a home-cooked meal with others is such a simple tradition, yet it is a detail of our hospitality many guests remember most vividly. When I encounter them years later somewhere in the city, they will often gush about the "home-cooked dinners." You would think we had served a grand banquet. Perhaps we had by alleviating the hunger that comes from loneliness.

While we pursue the tasks of daily life on Mason Street, the genocide in Gaza grinds on. Scott remains faithful to the weekly peace vigil in downtown Worcester, and every Monday night, I meet, via zoom, with as many as twelve or fourteen local activists working hard to end the war. Their persistence and creativity, along with the resilience of the Palestinian people themselves, give me strength during this cruel and bitter time. Each effort we make for peace professes the presence of the Kingdom of God here on this earth. Now. While these efforts may appear as tiny and useless as the dribbled sunflowers in our yard, they too will bloom.

It's been a long time since we have used this column to beg for donations. Generous gifts received from readers in the past two years allowed us to cover our regular expenses. But those funds are now running low, while our monthly costs have increased significantly. Groceries, utility bills, the price for printing this publication, everything is more expensive. Your donations would be most welcome. I recently read that we give, not out of duty, but in response to the generosity of God. May you experience this holy generosity during the Advent and Christmas seasons. Pax et bonum. Ω **Claire**

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